

Comprehensive plan Focal Topics and Preliminary Recommendations

Draft 1.20.21

The Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan, as defined by the New York Department of State is a guiding document establishing the future vision of a community, and from which the community's planning and zoning laws should extend. This is established in New York State law, and supported by significant case law.

The purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to evaluate a community's historic and current conditions, available resources, and future aspirations, and to articulate, in one document, a coherent set of goals and objectives designed to address and achieve the community's aspirations. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan may establish priorities among the goals and objectives, and make recommendations about ideas or opportunities the community may consider as pathways for reaching those goals and objectives.

A Comprehensive Plan may be produced by a volunteer community group, or by a professional consultant or agency experienced in community planning, and many models in between. Once a Plan has been produced, it is delivered to the Community leadership, e.g. a town board or council, where it is debated and ideally, adopted. Once adopted, the community should review its planning and zoning laws and bring them into alignment with the Comprehensive Plan.

When development is considered, in addition to specific planning and zoning Laws, projects should be measured against the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. Between the Comprehensive Plan and local zoning laws, the Comprehensive Plan is the leading, and guiding, document.

As the guiding planning document for a community, it is critical the Comprehensive Plan be reviewed and revised on a regular basis. This process can be undertaken at any interval though ten years is a common time frame.

Town of Newcomb Comprehensive Plans

The Town of Newcomb first adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1990, which was updated in 2010. In early 2019 a committee was formed to begin the process of updating the 2010 Plan. Both the 1990 and 2010 Comprehensive Plans were important documents. The 1990 plan was instrumental in securing APA approval of the Town of Newcomb's planning and zoning laws, giving the Town local authority over almost all development in Town. Newcomb is still only one of 19 towns to have this power shifted from APA to the local municipality. The 2010 plan was instrumental in initiating a period of significant State investment in Newcomb, including the reconstruction of Route 28N, and funding for economic development resulting in the return of gas and dining and the expansion of lodging in the community.

The Comprehensive Plan Process

The process of developing a Comprehensive Plan generally flows through the following steps:

- Form committee
- Public Meeting
- Community Survey
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Stake Holder Surveys/Interviews
- Goals and Implementation Strategies
- Draft Plan
- Public Meeting

- Final Plan
- Delivery to Town Leadership
- Discussion and Formal Adoption

Adoption and Implementation

Once the final Plan is delivered to community leaders, they should review, discuss and deliberate over the Plan. A model process with community engagement throughout should result in the creation of a Plan reflecting broadly shared goals and objectives, which in turn should make the formal adoption of the plan a consensus or even unanimous action.

Once adopted, a Comprehensive Plan is only as good as the action it stimulates within the community to work towards the goals and objectives, the vision establish in the Plan. This can be accomplished in many ways, either by direct action from town leadership (executive or board), or by delegated action, for example through community volunteers and committees. In this way momentum can be established and capacity can be generated to advance on the vision of the Plan.

Surveys

In the summer and fall of 2019 the comprehensive plan committee released a community survey seeking input on current conditions in Newcomb, awareness of previous and current community and strategic planning efforts, and perspectives on future desires and goals for the Town.

The survey was mailed to every registered mailing address and box holder in Newcomb, as well as promoted in the Town newsletter, and linked to the Town website. In addition, it was promoted via social media on the Town's Facebook and Twitter feeds.

The survey could be completed on paper and returned to the Town Hall, or filled out and submitted electronically.

77 responses were collected, representing both paper and electronic submissions. This represents a response rate of 21% of registered voters (362) or 17% of the general Town population, assuming a year round population of 450 individuals. All surveys were submitted to Chazen Companies, Glens Falls NY, for compilation and analysis. Chazen submitted an analysis and synthesis of the survey responses to the Committee on November 21st of 2019.

The full text of Chazen's report can be found in appendix X of this document, while consensus perspectives will be presented and explored below.

In early winter of 2020 the Committee finalized and released a complimentary survey directed at business owners, and other professional organizations and agencies based in or active in the Town of Newcomb. 81 individuals representing a wide range of entities were contacted directly seeking their input and perspectives on the Town from an economic perspective. A list of stakeholders and their affiliations can be found in appendix X of this document. 15 surveys, 7 paper and 8 electronic, were returned in paper or electronic form. This represents a response rate of 18.5%.

Consensus perspectives will be presented and explored below in parallel with perspectives from the Community survey.

Population Decline

Almost universally the increasing average age and declining population of Newcomb is a major concern of survey respondents. And similarly, no other topic generated as much conversation during the Committee's meetings and discussions.

However, population decline is not a problem Newcomb alone faces, or one that is limited to the Adirondack region. It is not a problem caused by the State, or the fault of regional and local leadership now or through time. Rural population decline is a national trend clearly charted over the past two decades and longer.

It is a symptom of a changing economy and shift in the United States from agriculture and manufacturing jobs towards those in technology and service. It is measured in a national migration from small rural communities to large metropolitan ones. The US Census bureau estimated in November of 2018 that fully 80% of Americans live in urban areas, and that number is expected to increase following analysis of the 2020 census data.

Newcomb like small communities across the United States is faced with a multi-faceted problem of out-migration of native youth, low or no recruitment of young families, few jobs, and a housing market generally not aligned with first-home ownership needs.

These challenges are not unique to our town, which perhaps surprisingly presents a major opportunity: Newcomb can investigate and research the experiences of similar communities across the nation to learning about effective approaches and best practices that have been successfully employed by other rural towns, evaluating and considering which ideas and initiatives might help Newcomb reverse declining population trends. Newcomb has an opportunity to lead the Adirondacks in implementing creative and community-appropriate efforts to rebuild the population of our Town.

One approach in particular generated significant conversation – exploring how we can attract and recruit families seeking to re-establish life in another part of our country, or those who have been resettled in the United States from abroad, but who are willing and interested in resettling in a community like Newcomb.

In communities across our State and Nation resettlement of families from within the US or abroad has been a powerful engine for economic growth and community renewal. However, resettling families, especially those who may be first generation English speakers can be challenging, requiring strong community support systems for the new community members to successfully integrate into the community.

Examples where resettlement has positively transformed communities in New York include Utica, Syracuse, and Buffalo. Examples in other parts of the nation include TX, CO, SD, and UT. In the fall of 2019 the Governor of Utah asked the Federal government to give them more refugees, not less. None of the communities in NY and these other States are as small as Newcomb, but creative strategies and partnerships could alleviate the challenge of size. For example, with families now established in Utica for 2 or 3 generations, Newcomb might be able to recruit members of those same families looking to chart their own course while still being within 3 hours of family. Several articles and additional materials exploring the question of resettlement are included in the appendix.

Ideas for addressing population decline include:

- Work with successful resettlement communities (Utica, Syracuse, and Buffalo) to attract first and second generation Americans to relocate and start businesses in Newcomb
- Work with the NYS Dept of State to explore resettlement programs
- Work with FEMA to identify pathways for reaching climate-impacted residents in the United States looking to relocate
- Promote job creation opportunities in Newcomb (see Marketing and Jobs sections below)
- Promote Newcomb Central School/quality of education (see Marketing and NCSD sections below)

- Work with the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources to advance the legislatures understanding of, support for, and action on helping rural communities in NY rebuild population

Recommendation: Form a committee whose charge is to research rural population growth ideas and actions, successes and failures, culminating in the production of a "Repopulation Action Plan for Newcomb"

Marketing

There is broad consensus that marketing the Town of Newcomb is an important and beneficial activity. And while not unanimous, there is clear support for the Town investing directly in marketing.

However, there is a recognized distinction between creating and placing advertisements, which are excellent, but currently ad hoc, and developing a strategic marketing plan against which individual ads or ad campaigns can be designed and developed to advance and achieve larger strategic goals.

The survey results and committee discussion identified several areas where a professional, thoughtful, and detailed Town marketing plan can focus advertising energy and investment with the goal of meeting and addressing identified Town needs.

Specific marketing opportunities identified through the community and stakeholder process included campaigns focused on:

- Attracting existing business investment/relocation
- Promoting the development of new, small scale businesses
- Attracting families to the community
- Attracting families to the school
- Promoting real estate housing market in Newcomb
- Promoting real estate development opportunities in Newcomb
- Promoting Newcomb as a recreational alternative to Tri-Lakes
- Promoting Newcomb as a recreational entry point
- Promoting Newcomb as a recreational hub for citizens with mobility impairments (ADA)

Recommendation 1: the Town of Newcomb develop a marketing plan establishing strategic goals and aligning marketing and advertising efforts and investment with those goals.

Recommendation 2: the Town of Newcomb consider developing a part-time marketing position to work in coordination with the recently created part-time advertising and event position. These jobs could be combined at a future point, creating a fulltime position used to attract an early or mid-career professional to Newcomb.

Housing

A common feeling expressed about Newcomb is that there is limited or no housing available. Respondents to surveys and discussion during committee meetings indicates this is not an accurate representation of the availability of housing stock for sale in Newcomb at any given time. An informal tally of houses for sale in Newcomb during the fall and early winter of 2019 and 2020 determined between 10 and 20 homes for sale. These homes represented a significant range in condition and price, and highlighted the opportunity for better understanding the housing stock, type, size, condition and scale of market in the Town. This information will be critical informing and supporting marketing, business development and school recruiting efforts, among others.

A significant gap in the housing market in Newcomb as identified on many surveys and in committee discussions is a lack of rental housing, either in the form of apartments, houses, or even “Rent to own” models. This need was identified as an opportunity to address several issues:

- Transitional housing for new residents
- Transitional housing for aspiring home-owners
- Transitional/long-term housing for home-owners looking to “down size”
- Affordable housing for low-wage workers

Addressing this housing need could be met in several potential ways:

- Work to attract developers to existing private properties in Newcomb
- Work to attract developers to appropriate public properties in Newcomb
- Work with realtors to identify and list properties as sale or rent
- Work with owners to identify rental options

Recommendation: The Town of Newcomb conduct a detailed assessment of current housing stock, and current housing stock on the market, with the goal of identifying and defining with a high degree of detail and accuracy the housing opportunity in town.

Job analysis

Reflecting the common refrain heard about housing, casual community conversation regularly repeats there are no jobs in Newcomb. However, survey responses and discussion in Committee identified many areas of opportunity for job creation and development. Many of these opportunities require risk, personal time and financial, and also are entry-level or early career opportunities.

However, while not naïve or blind to other community challenges, the Committee believes these job development opportunities work in parallel with other goals identified in the surveys, including most importantly attracting new families to Newcomb (population decline) and attracting new students to the school (school enrollment).

Through survey responses and Committee discussion the following job opportunities or labor gaps were identified:

- Landscaping
- Small engine repair
- Light and medium contracting
- Electrical service
- Plumbing service
- Home health aid
- Physical/occupational therapist
- Daycare provider

Recommendation: The Town should canvass the community to learn about creative ideas and noted needs for developing job growth. This information should result in a “Economic Development Opportunity” report informing marketing and advertising, grant writing, and collaboration and coordination with State and local partners to build businesses and jobs.

Newcomb Central School District

Almost universally, survey respondents recognize the critical importance and value of the Newcomb Central School District (NCSD) as an asset and core element of Town. Respondents are overwhelmingly concerned about declining enrollment. NCSD has been proactive over the past 15 years exploring creative efforts to increase enrollment and attract new students. NCSD's leadership continues working aggressively to maintain a vibrant school while providing quality instruction for its students.

Surveys and committee discussion has identified several ways in which the Town can more actively support the school to the benefit of both the school and the community.

- Develop, in coordination with NCSD, marketing strategies and advertising campaigns to increase enrollment
- Invite a representative of the school administration or board to meeting on a regular basis with town officials (board meetings) to identify shared concerns and opportunities for collaboration
- Delegate a Town Council member to regularly attend School Board meetings

Recommendation: The Town work directly with the Newcomb Central School District to improve promotion, recruitment, and enrollment in NCSD, and improve bi-lateral communication between school and Town.

Community Communication

You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink" is an adage for a reason. No matter how obvious your efforts, they are sometimes ignored. This is certainly true when considering Town communications. There will always be people who don't see, don't receive, or don't read updates, bulletins, newsletters and other official communications.

However, this does not mean the Town should ignore assessing its communication strategies with an eye towards always refining our efforts and improving our reach. While not universal, nonetheless communication-related issues and concerns were a common thread across survey responses.

In particular, the improving the consistency (already a significant improvement over the past couple of years) of the release, format, and availability of the Town Newsletter should be a goal. Release of the newsletter can be supported by social media announcements alerting people to expect its arrival. In addition, the newsletter should be digitized and hosted to the Town website.

Other methods of improving Town communications and messaging include:

- Developing and investing in a Town-wide wireless network for travelers and visitors
- Creating stand-alone issue-specific "Fact Sheets" sharing background and basic information, bulleted highlights, and contact information for additional information. Examples could include
 - Explaining the Tax Levy
 - Explaining Homestead v Non-homestead
 - Explaining grant applications and projects
 - Sharing Newcomb success stories (e.g. state funding, grants received, project progress updates etc.)

Recommendation: The Town assess all current forms of communication to determine integration, amplification, and complementarity. The assessment should include canvassing the community to learn how information consumers currently receive Town information. This assessment should result in a report identifying which tools are working, which are not, and which tools the Town can adopt to increase reach and improve citizen knowledge of Town activities.

Agriculture – Food, Fiber, Fuel

Agriculture, the science of cultivating crops and livestock, can fairly be considered humankind's first profession, and one that has been practiced almost everywhere on Earth. Despite local humor that the primary crop yield in the Adirondacks is rocks, Newcomb has a long history of agriculture which continues to this day.

Though larger- and medium scale private farms like the Pryun's at Santanoni, are not necessarily reasonable to consider, small scale farms have made an enormous resurgence in the Adirondacks over the past several decades. Often these farms are owned and operated by younger generation with different goals and products than previous generations of farmers. Many produce "artisanal" products, such as cheese and meats, and grains that go into making locally crafted spirits. This new agricultural movement has direct economic benefits, but also ancillary benefits, for example creating agriculture-based tourism. This is clearly evident in the creation of tourism trails like the Adirondack cheese tours in the AuSable Valley and Champlain Valley farm and winery biking tours.

Our first instinct when we consider agriculture is to think crops, which tends to prompt our second instinct, which is 'it's too cold and too short' thinking about Newcomb's growing season. While accurate to a degree, this ignores a range of technological and management adaptations available to enhance crop production. In addition, it ignores a changing climate. While there is no reason to think our growing season/hardiness zone ranking (4 according to USDA HZ maps) will change significantly, even incremental changes in winter intensity and duration may allow for significant changes in what plants can be cultivated in Newcomb, especially in combination with other management tools.

Beyond crops however, agriculture also means and includes animal husbandry, and in particular, the raising and management of animals producing fiber for a range of trades and crafts. Raising sheep is continuous and direct link to the some of earliest agriculture in Newcomb.

While often not thought of in terms of a crop, trees are a managed, cultivated resource, just as a vegetable garden, though on a different spatial and temporal scale. Forestry, formally silviculture, which is the profession of growing and harvesting of trees, is included as a form of agriculture, which is consistent with New York regulatory perspectives. Forestry in New York State falls under the domain of the NYS Department of Agriculture.

Newcomb sits at the center of the largest wilderness area outside of Alaska. Yet it also sits in the midst of one of the largest working forests outside of Alaska, and the Pacific Northwest. Wood is all around us, and while the first thing many people see is a lot of State land, the other half of the Adirondack Park – 3 million acres - is privately owned, including a significant amount in and around Newcomb.

Starting in the mid-1800's and continuing for roughly 125 years, logging was one of largest employers in Newcomb, the evidence of which today is seen in the number of garages visible from 28N built to house truck cabs, and in the number of French-Canadian and other families who form so strong and deep a part of the fabric of our community.

But technology and globalization has transformed logging in the Adirondacks, resulting in a vastly reduced full-time workforce, as well as a transition of several major timber holdings to the State. Many mourn this change, and seek a restoration of the logging industry of the past.

While it is unrealistic and unproductive to focus on recreating the historic timber industry, Newcomb has an opportunity to benefit from thinking about the future timber industry. Several conditions will drive this, but all rest on the fact that the world will always need wood. This need takes many forms and applications, some old, some new, and many unimagined. Wood, or Bio-mass, represents one of the most under-valued renewable resources available.

First and foremost, bio-mass can be a source of fuel, in the form of wood pellets for heating, chips and wood waste for power generation, and ethanol distilled from chips and other wood waste prior to secondary processing. Collectively, power derived from bio-mass is called bioenergy, and perhaps its greatest benefit it provides constant, 24/7 energy, providing a baseline to meet demand supporting other intermittent renewables. In 2020 Governor Andrew Cuomo set forth a goal for

New York State to obtain 70% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. Adirondack timber and woodlands could and should be a component of achieving this renewable energy goal.

Bio-mass can also be utilized in new ways in the construction industry. Mass Timber is the term used to describe a variety of “engineered wood products” used in construction. Most common of the Mass Timber materials is Cross Laminated Timbers, or CLTs, which are, as they sound, multiple layers of perpendicular dimensional lumber (think common 2x4) glued together to form a wall segment. CLTs can then be assembled into structures of practically any size and shape, and at a significant savings over traditional construction materials. Importantly however, in addition to the economic advantage, Mass Timber uses renewable resources, in direct contrast to steel and concrete.

Mass Timber design and construction emerged in Europe 30 years ago and has now extended to North America, where it was included in National Design Specifications for Wood in 2015. Currently, there are 15 or more manufactures in Europe, but only 2 in the United States, both on the West Coast. A mill is under construction in Maine, and will be the only planned producer on the East Coast. As Mass Timber and other wood engineered products use and demand increases Adirondack timber and wood lands could and should be part of the growth of this industry.

Surveys and committee discussion identified that the production of food, fiber, and fuel are areas where Newcomb has an opportunity to attract and support new business and residents. Several opportunities Newcomb can consider and explore to support agricultural enterprise in town include:

- Work with our legislative and elected leaders to ensure biomass is included in the NYS’ renewable energy legislation
- Work with the Empire State Forest Products Association to learn more about Mass Timber and Bioenergy opportunities
- Work with ESF to collaborate on and attract biomass research and demonstration to Newcomb
- Work with regional timber lands owners and managers to explore opportunities for collaborative strategic planning on industry development
- Work with regional timber lands owners to develop and inventory of working forest lands, learn about planned harvesting, and better understand owner long-term goals and short- and mid-term plans
- Work with regional timber lands owners to understand employment needs, in terms of skill sets and capacity, and collaborate on recruiting potential employees to jobs and residents to Newcomb.
- Work with the Department of Agriculture to explore funding opportunities to promote small scale farming, farm to table, farm to school and other similar initiatives
- Collaborate with regional organizations dedicated to supporting and expanding small-scale agriculture, e.g. Adirondack Harvest, Cornell Cooperative Extension, etc.
- Assess existing and potential land in Newcomb capable of supporting small-scale agriculture

Recommendation: The Town work actively with State agencies, NGOs, private industry and regional entities to explore new opportunities and trends in agriculture that can increase economic and residential activity in Newcomb.

Town-owned Land Assessment

The Town of Newcomb owns undeveloped parcels throughout the community. These parcels have previously been carefully inventoried to collect and share location, size, zoning classification and other identifying information.

Through survey response and committee discussion there is strong consensus that using this inventory as a starting point, a careful review of each property should be undertaken to advance understanding of these parcels from a potential development perspective. This additional level of detail, including but not limited to land type, topography, building site potential, and contiguous landowners/surrounding neighborhood character, will inform “best use” recommendations for each parcel. These recommendations would be collected in a report that would then guide marketing and community development efforts.

Recommendation: The Town of Newcomb conduct a detailed assessment of all current land holdings, with the goal of identifying and establishing a recommended best and highest use for each parcel.

Community development and infrastructure plan

Over generations, the Town of Newcomb has changed dramatically, in ways both seen and unseen. The most notable way in which one can see the changes in Newcomb over time is by considering infrastructure, particularly buildings.

In the same way a home is known by its previous owner, time is often marked by the previous presence or absence of certain structures. For example “back when the apartment buildings where there” or “before they built the new school...” are common ways of indicating a time period. Buildings are literal and collective memory landmarks, and the power of that level of permanence should not be underestimated.

Structures are built to last, and without careful consideration of design and siting, the community may be left with a deteriorating or incompletely considered landmark it has limited means for altering or removing. Planning and zoning laws and their respective citizen boards exist expressly to guide planning and development in Newcomb to avoid these situations.

However, there are certain sites within the Town where a specific, community-lead planning process would greatly benefit larger town planning initiatives, grant-writing, development, siting and construction. This is most important at sites where infrastructure development may take place in phases separated by significant periods of time.

Surveys and committee discussion revealed an extremely high level of concern about risks to the character of the Overlook Park and the proposed Town Core site from ad hoc development. As expressed frequently, the Overlook Park is a “gem” that should not be “messed up.”

Recommendation: The Town of Newcomb engage the community in a planning process specific to the Overlook Park, and the Town Core Concept, either singularly or together as a supplement to the Comprehensive plan and for the purpose of establishing a vision for both sites as well as development vision goals and objectives.

Public transportation

A recognized and significant challenge associated with attracting entry level workers and starting families is the economics of owning a vehicle and driving to work. It is interesting to note that approximately half of full-time workers living in the town of Newcomb do not work in the Town. This means people are willing to live here, but travel to work. This represents a major opportunity for recruiting new residents.

However, the as noted above, time, distance and costs may limit the ability of one or both heads of a given household from accessing full-time work, which at entry-levels may not provide enough income to offset the cost of owning, insuring and operating a personal vehicle.

In larger communities public transportation and ride for hire (cabs, Uber, etc.) are common solutions. While these may seem like barriers to recruitment and or employment, solutions and funding may exist at the regional and State level.

Developing a system, unique to Newcomb or in collaboration with neighboring towns or even The Five Towns, could serve as a powerful leveling agent in promoting community growth. Public transportation integrates with efforts to address school enrollment, population decline and other challenges facing Town.

Recommendation: The Town work actively with State agencies, NGOs, neighboring communities, and regional entities to explore new opportunities and trends in providing public transportation with the goal of lowering barriers and increasing economic and residential activity in Newcomb.

Health Care

Consistent across surveys, committee deliberations, and informal discussion with community residents is an overwhelming support for independent medical care and paid EMT services in the Town of Newcomb. In particular, the quality, availability, and scope of care (pediatric to geriatric) are extremely important to town residents, both in terms of care available to community members, as well as serving as a marketing asset with which to attract visitors and potential residents to town. The community is sensitive to the benefits of having a health care facility that is not aligned with a large-scale or corporate-driven health care provider. Instead, community members expressed a strong preference for maintaining the level of service and quality of care currently available in town.

Recommendation: The Town of Newcomb should make it a high priority to maintain an independent health care provider and associated services. This should include establishing a transition plan, in conversation with the current sponsoring practice and in-town provider, for the maintenance of services into the future

“Main Street Development”

State Route 28N (28N) is the Town of Newcomb's Main Street. As such, it serves as the “Thoroughfare” for residents and the “First Impression” for visitors. As we work to revitalize our town in terms of our population and plan programs and policy for the future, it is imperative we do not forget to invest time and energy in the form, and function, of our infrastructure. In particular when considering 28N, we need to be mindful of how our community looks and functions from ‘behind a windshield.’

Newcomb is a community defined by the wild character of our surroundings, and we should work to reflect that in the quantity, distribution and location of impervious surface area (including asphalt) immediately adjacent to 28N.

In addition, as we seek to develop increased economic activity along the 28N corridor we must also be attentive to the safe flow of traffic, including the exiting and entering for traffic from intersecting streets and driveways.

Recommendation: The Town should work with NYS DOT to explore traffic-calming and traffic control devices reducing average speeds along the 28N corridor through Newcomb. In addition, the Town should adopt laws guiding the placement of curb-cuts and driveways, and develop guidelines for the thoughtful review of impervious surfaces as an element of any new development and construction projects.

Renewable Energy

New York State has made a serious commitment to transition to renewable energy over the next decade. This commitment, outlined in the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, will impact all communities across the State, large and small. Though Newcomb is an energy consumer, there are potential opportunities for energy production at residential and perhaps even commercial scale. These opportunities need to be assessed and investigated, including conducting an inventory of suitable open spaces for commercial-scale solar and wind energy production. Furthermore, residential-scale solar and wind should be explored, and information made available to residents outlining options, resources and contacts. In addition, bio-fuels should be explored as alternatives for heat and fuel for town buildings and vehicles. Newcomb can and should be a leader and model for other communities in the region.

Actions for Newcomb to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Invite NYSERDA to conduct a community audit and site review to better understand realistic opportunities for renewable energy production and use in Newcomb, and at what scales.
- Host community-sponsored public informational meetings, perhaps with guest speakers from NYSERDA, NYSEG and others, should be held over a period of months, promoted via Town media outlets, to inform residents of opportunities, costs, and State goals.
- Revise Town laws to anticipate and manage planning, development and installation of alternative energy systems

Recommendation: The Town should create a Renewable Energy Task Force. This body will explore opportunities for Newcomb to transition its energy systems (community and residential) towards a lower carbon footprint and submit recommended actions to Town elected leaders.

Organic Waste Reduction

As a societal average, 40% of the solid waste we produce is organic. This organic material, which will breakdown through natural processes, can be removed from the solid waste stream instead of being buried and encapsulated for generations underground without decomposing. Removing this material from the waste stream represents a significant opportunity to improve waste management at community and societal scales. By diverting this material from the waste stream we can at once reduce volume in landfills, reduce our hauling fees (calculated per ton), create a desirable natural resource for our community and region, and create a potential revenue stream in the process.

Recommendation: The Town of Newcomb should undertake a feasibility study to understand the potential for a community based scrap-food and organic materials recycling program. This feasibility study would inform and guide the development of a community composting program in Newcomb, serving residents, businesses, and potentially adjacent communities.

Why Newcomb?

The Comprehensive Plan Committee engaged in an exercise articulating how we think about Newcomb, as a process for developing a series of values defining “Why Newcomb...” These values should be drawn on and used as the guiding foundation for the promotion and marketing of Newcomb. However, these values, collected from residents, should be matched by a repeated process conducted with non-resident Newcomb stakeholders. These could be conducted through outreach to social media fans, previous guests of local business, and recreationalists frequenting town. Pairing the values of residents with the values of non-residents would create powerful value-set to drive the development of effective and targeted marketing and promotional materials and campaigns.

These values, in no particular order, include:

*Four seasons
Heart
Passion
Welcoming
Tranquil
Peaceful
Safe
Classic*

*Remote, but connected
Natural beauty
Recreational opportunities
Wildness (not wilderness)
Education/learning
History
Caring
Healthy*

*Family
Neighborly
Privacy
Respect
Pride*

Recommendation: These values serve as a starting point for defining a suite of themes guiding integrated marketing materials and promotional activities for the town.